ENO

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question about Why He Left Roxy — although it seemed as though that's the only thing many American journalists were asking Eno. He thought it an extremely tedious question. But I hadn't seen him since then and I really wanted to know.

"I left because I had no other choice. Bryan said 'I'm never going onstage with you again'. He said that, he threw that out to the band. He wanted me to leave. I knew it was coming, I knew it was coming long before anyone else did. We didn't disagree musically at all, and we never have really. It was a number of things, some of them had to do with my being in the press, and he thought I was trying to do this whole operation behind his back, to become the leader of the band. I wasn't interested in that at all. And it was obvious that it wasn't my role in that band. The thing that fascinated me about Roxy was that there was this interplay of musicians, and it was all up front, even if visually it didn't seem that way. There was the possibility of anybody being a star for fifteen minutes kind of thing, and it wasn't a traditional concept of one person walking out front with the spotlight and people with long hair standing around — not in the beginning anyway, we discussed all that.

"But Bryan really conned everyone," Eno continued, "because at the same time he wanted to be surrounded by musicians who were very strong, with strong identities, he would want us to suppress it whenever he required us to. But you can't ask people to do that. If you get musicians who are intelligent and know what they are doing you can't say to them, 'Well — switch it on now because I want your talent and then switch it off now because I want my own. And I don't want it threatened by anyone'. And basically this is what Bryan was saying.

"This reflects not at all on the fact that he is an excellent artist. That is obvious. There is no point in discussing that and it should be obvious and I think that as well. But it reflects on his qualities as a human being — where he's deceitful and callous at the same time that he's charming and sensitive. He's also wildly ambitious and paranoid."

Do you want all this in?

"I don't mind, as long as you include the good things I've said.

"See — I like doing interviews and he doesn't like doing them all that much. And he doesn't open up that much when he does do them whereas I talk very freely. And I'm photogenic and" — *wait* a minute, Ferranti's photogenic — "Well, I always looked like the most bizarre member of Roxy. So if a paper printed something about Roxy the photo would be of me. I mean I didn't go round to the papers and say 'here's my picture' . . . I'm not into that at all. But my success rate is very high in pictures. I just don't take bad photos, I'm just lucky, I guess, with these bones or something. And this sag here." (pointing to his cheeks), "Now this reflects nothing except that I photograph well in still pictures. Bryan looks very good in films — which I don't.

"But there certainly were ideas that came out of Roxy that they have stopped doing that I would really like to carry on. For example, the idea of not having a focus on stage — it could have been me or Andy or Bryan at one time, and it was. I think of myself as an organiser of musical events — and at the beginning of Roxy it was exciting because a truly experimental situation existed. But Bryan didn't really level about where he wanted to go with it; he boldly lied to everybody. It really didn't seem apparent to us at all where it was going."

I asked Eno if he'd seen Roxy perform at all recently. "I was going to go to the Rainow but apparently Bryan left a message that if I showed up I should be kept at the back of the hall because he didn't want to see me."

Why?

"Because he's very guilty."

"I expect this'll be my last interview for NME", he said as I left.

JON LORD.

Pic: PENNIE SMITH

'Err, yes ... well ... no I mean, I suppose ... but really, no ... of course I'm proud but yes ... err, no ...

Hell's teeth JON LORD, make up your mind, tell STEVE CLARKE whether or not you like the two solo album projects you've been working on?

'Err, yes ... but really, it's too early ... I mean, no ... of course I err yes, no, err, yes really ...

JON LORD isn't going about this at all right.

He has a couple of solo albums on the market and I know he's an honest guy and all that and he's into it for the sake of art and it's only the record company that wants to sell these records. But by saying thinks like, "It's not my album. I'm just choogling along in the background," in reference to "Battle Of The Big Bands" — the album he made with Tony Ashton or rather the album Ashton made with Lord — he is rather defeating the object of this interview as seen by the record company.

And Lord's not too sure of the merits of "Windows" — the other album bearing his name amongst its credits currently available at the nation's record stores — with statements like, "I'm not at all positive it makes a very necessary album."

And to top off all this neo-masochism he writes off a couple of Deep Purple albums in the course of our chat.

Still, Jon Lord is an amiable enough fella. There's nothing about his physical appearance or manner which identifies him as a rock musician or star. He's wearing the kind of clothes — not-too-worn jeans, a dark-coloured V-neck sweater and, of course, stack-heeled shoes — that most people can afford and purchase in any reasonable-sized city. And there's no physical or mental signs of drug abuse. He just sips brandy and dry ginger and talks about the solo albums and Deep Purple.

The Ashton-Lord album was recorded over a two year period and started out when Lord took a little ditty along to Ashton to see what he thought of it. "Deep Purple didn't like it," he says in his fairly nondescript middle-class tones. "We're Gonna Make It" was the title of the song and in the next two years Ashton, playing keyboards, writing and singing and Lord writing and playing keyboards accompanied by the likes of Ronnie Wood, Peter Frampton, Cozy Powell etcetera etcetera, decided they did.

So what was the motivation for you and Tony making the album?

"I like him and he likes me. We lift the occasional arm together." Fair enough. But there's a little more to it than that. Jon Lord also respects Tony Ashton's musical capabilities and wants to draw them to the public's attention.

So it's a case of you and your name giving him a bit of a helping hand?

"That came into it. I assumed my name carried some weight. It's Tony's album. It's not my album." (See what I mean about not going about it the right way).

"He does all the singing. We split the keyboard duties. I rehearsed the band in the studios. We mixed the album together.

"I've always felt he plays the best boogie piano I've ever heard — for an Englishman. Very few people are aware of that. It's a very R 'n' B album as opposed to rock 'n' roll."

Do you think it's an album the public really needs or wants?

"I think if you made albums under the assumption that people either wanted them or didn't want them there wouldn't be many albums made," he answers before adding, "I don't think the name Jon Lord will sell millions of albums. I think the album will sell on its merit. I'd like to think so anyway."

Okay, now about this "Windows" album, the one which feaures six rock musicians (Purple's Dave Coverdale and Glenn Hughes, Pete York and Ray Fenwick late of The Spencer Davis Group and Ashton and Lord) together with the Munich Chamber Opera Orchestra . . .

"That's weird. It wasn't intended originally to be an album," eludicates the man with the moustache. It transpires that Lord wrote the piece with the orchestra's conductor, Eberhard Schoener, after it was commissioned for performance at some German television beanfeast.

The recording was originally intended for German release only but — EMI (England), not wanting to miss out on a good thing, decided to release it world-wide. Over to Lord: "Ill be very honest with you. I'm not at all positive that it makes a particularly necessary album. This was intended as a live performance. I haven't heard the tapes enough to decide whether I like it."

So it wasn't your decision to release it?

"It was out of my hands."

But seeing as it's being released on Purple Records — your record company which is distributed through EMI — one would have thought you'd have had more say?

"I suppose if I really, really put my foot down I might have been able to stop something. I'm quite happy putting it out. Don't get me wrong. I'm proud of it. I'm not excusing the work. I'm not at all sure whether it's very, very strange. It's an orchestra, six rock musicians and two opera singers. A bit berserk. Visually, it was rather fun. Exciting. Weird. I like weird things."

So what's it all about?

"I wrote a thing called 'The Gemini Suite' years ago and we took one of the movements out of that, put that in the middle and wrote outwards. The conductor came up with the idea for it. They used to write this poetry — you won't believe this but in the 14th century China they used to write this poetry, chain poetry. Seven or eight poets would get together, sit down and write a chain poem with each person writing a verse. We set one of these poems to music."

Uhuh.

"There's one line which says you can't copulate with an elephant. The poem is about, quote, life, unquote. Life in 14th century China. I don't know . . . errhh . . . well the poem is actually about communication. It's only a jumping off point. The idea was that we write the music in the same way as that poem had been written. We bounced off each other. He did one bit, I did the next bit and so on.

"I like doing different things. I can't be *not* busy. Musically I've got to be doing something if Deep Purple's got three weeks off."

You find Deep Purple restricting?

"No, not at all It's just that I've got other sides to my musical character that don't get . . . well yes, I suppose that I do but not in the sense of feeling restricted. I believe that a musician should be able to extend himself if he wants to and the thing about Deep Purple is that we've always agreed on that. Glenn and Dave are on "Windows'.

The title of the piece came from Schoener: "The conductor named it because, in German, windows is Fenster and Fenster has more than one meaning in German. I'm not at all sure of the other meaning. In fact, I've had considerable less to do with it than any other thing I've ever done. It's like a bastard son."

You seem very wary of your involvement in both albums.

"My involvement in the Ashton-Lord thing is far more positive. I'm very proud of that album. I believe in it. I love Tony Ashton. The 'Windows' thing I'm obviously proud of because I worked very hard at it. I worked a lot of hours to write it for the orchestra but I'm far more objective about that.

"But I'm very subjective about the Ashton one.

"To put one thing straight 'Windows' is not rock 'n' roll. It's not a rock band playing with an orchestra. It's rock musicians *with* an orchestra. There's a subtle and very important difference. I can see that some people are going to love it and some people are absolutely going to hate it." Lord is more confident about the other side of the "Windows" album — which, he says, takes off where, er Bach left off.

"That I'm far more excited about. The idea wasn't mine — it was given to me by the conductor. He told me about this piece that Bach had died before completing. It's a fugue. It's a very estoteric, it's a very personal thing. Bach just wrote it to prove that it could be done. It wasn't actually written for any one instrument — which is interesting because he wrote most things for a specific voice or sound.

"It happens to be a very beautiful peice of music. The actual piece of music Bach wrote is only five minutes long. We made that the central theme. Either side of that is an improvisation. Most of the group stuff — apart from the central section — is pure improvisation. It's all very intellectual but it wasn't really."

Lucid, huh?

"Its very difficult talking about something like this without sounding . . . I don't like intellectuals. When we played it we got a 15 minute standing ovation."

LET'S CHANGE the subject. The music of Deep Purple has been called Progressive . . .

"It's not progressive."

It was in 1968.

"It was then. Now it's part of the spectrum we all accept."

Why did you think it was progressive then?

"Because we were one of the first bands to do it. We'd learnt from something we'd heard. Deep Purple didn't come out of thin air."

Would you then say Deep Purple have stayed stationary over the last five years?

"No, not within the band. It's just that we've found a type of music to play that knocks us out. We thoroughly enjoy it and the progression in the band has been of a natural rather than an unnatural order. We've never said 'Tomorrow we're going to stop all this and start something completely new'. I disregard two albums we've made. I disregard 'Who Do We Think We Are' and 'Fireball'. I forget those because I don't like them. I think they were gratuitous albums."

Why don't you like them?

"I don't know."

Why did you make them?

"'Who Do We Think We Are' was made under a period of enormous stress. Internally the band was screwed up, which is why Gillan and Glover are no longer with the band. You have to sign record contracts and they ask you for so many albums a year. In our case it's two. If you don't deliver you can be sued. Unfortunately 'Who Do We Think We Are' had to be made. At the time we still thought we were making a good album. But the feeling wasn't there. It was patently obvious when I heard the finished product but there was nothing I could do about it."

So would you say you conned your audience?

"Yes I think you're probably right. We're not entirely without blame in that instance. Perhaps we should have put our foot down. Perhaps we should have said, 'No. This album is crap!' It's very difficult to draw a line between your own musical sense of values and your audiences sence of what they want. A lot of people liked that album.

"But I'm very much aware of the progression in Deep Purple. Whether other people are or not I'm actually not interested. I'm happy with what Deep Purple is. You know why people buy our records? Because they like Deep Purple."

Surely that's where your audience is acting as a constraining force on your music?

"It could well be. Yes. Yeah. I can name you a specific case. For some considerable time Ritchie has wanted to loosen up. He's very interested in slide guitar but he's found very little opportunity to place it within Deep Purple. I'm sure that acts as a constriction on him."

One of the things you were saying earlier was Ritchie enjoys the freedom . . .

"But he has freedom *with the context* of the band. He's free to do what he wants on stage as far as we're concerned. He's felt the lack of interest from the audience on certain occasions when he's tried something new. This is something every popular band has to deal with."

Do you foresee a time when your solo commitments will be such that you'll consider leaving Deep Purple?

"I don't foresee that. I don't see any reason why Deep Purple shouldn't go on being a valid band for another three or four years."

Deep Purple started recording their follow-up album to "Burn" last week and with the number of songs that have already been written for it Lord reckons it's likely to be a double album. He also foresees a change of style for the band: "At least half the songs we've written are not the sort of things you'd expect for Deep Purple but hopefully there'll be the sort of songs you'll accept from within.

"There's a couple of melodic things which we don't normally associate ourselves with. Most of Purple's music has been very simple, on a very simple level musically. I mean harmonically. It's quite difficult to play but melodically and harmonically it's very simple. It looks like it will be a departure from that direction — which I'll be pleased to see."